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Inside Report . . .

By Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

Behind the CIA Crisis

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THE RABORN CRISIS in the Central Intelligence Agency has become a top concern among Johnson Administration officials who deal with the Nation's security.

Stated bluntly, the crisis is one of confidence in the head of the CIA appointed last April: Retired Admiral William F. Raborn, who deserves his reputation as the Navy's hero in the development of the vital Polaris missile.

But developing the Polaris has nothing to do with running the cavernous, multi-faceted CIA—the world's largest intelligence apparatus. Unfortunately Raborn's administration has raised fears about the CIA's future. By gradually losing its high place in the Washington bureaucratic structure, there is question whether the CIA will recover any time soon after Raborn leaves.

Indeed, right now the CIA is losing influence to the Pentagon's DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency), a Kennedy Administration merger of Army, Navy and Air Force intelligence units.

SO LONG AS a strong personality—old intelligence hand Allen Dulles or industrialist John McCone—ran the CIA, its world-wide intelligence reports had priority over sometimes less reliable DIA studies. Furthermore, a right-wing element in DIA was kept under tight control by the influence of Dulles and McCone in the President's highest councils.

But the President, surprisingly enough, has not even called Raborn in to see him since his gall bladder operation two months ago. Accordingly, what ought to be the relentless impact of CIA thinking on the President (voiced by the chief of the agency) has been absent.

Furthermore, Raborn is neither intimate with international politics nor familiar with the business of intelligence. This inevitably means that Raborn lacks the vital, enthusiastic interest in intelligence reports from the field—the heart of the CIA operation. Displaying little curiosity about the intelligence craft himself, Raborn can scarcely convey it to the President—a necessary element of his job.

Novak Evans

In addition, a lack of sensitivity has shown up in Raborn's dealings outside the CIA. In Congress, some of those briefed by Raborn after the Dominican intervention were shocked when he indelicately suggested the possibility of "14 or 15 Dominican Republics" throughout Latin America before the problem of Communist subversion could be solved.

On another occasion, Raborn was supposed to be briefed by high Government officials on how to deal with the interlocking community of U.S. intelligence agencies. However, he showed little interest in this basic problem and instead gave a lengthy irrelevant recital of his Polaris experiences.

ALTHOUGH these events occurred several months ago, those concerned with the future of the CIA believe the situation is little improved today. The decline in the agency's morale in Washington hasn't hampered operations in the field yet, but some intelligence experts are deeply worried.

For instance, if CIA's place in Washington continues to give way to DIA, the absolutely essential interchange of intelligence with friendly foreign powers (sometimes as many as 30,000 documents a month with Britain's famous MI-6) conceivably could be compromised.

Why did President Johnson select Raborn in the first place? Partly as a caretaker to calm the agency's often stormy relations with Congress, to leave after a relatively short period.

Supporting this idea was his remarkably warm and friendly relations with Congress during Polaris days. With popular "Red" Raborn at the helm, it was thought, demands for a congressional watchdog committee over CIA would lessen. It is ironic then that Raborn faces an increasingly incessant demand for a congressional watchdog — spawned partly by the Raborn-induced CIA crisis.

YET, the real problem is not Congress. It is the usefulness of the CIA itself.

After the Bay of Pigs, the agency went through an agonizing crisis of confidence but recovered with a brilliant performance (based on expert interpretation of U-2 spy-plane pictures of Soviet missiles) during the October, 1962, Cuba affair.

But the newest crisis in the agency is internal, not external (like the Bay of Pigs). For that reason, it may be harder to cure.

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